

## NORTH KOREA BACKLASH

# S Korea, US begin largest military drills in years

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea and the United States began their largest joint military drills in years yesterday with a resumption of field training, officials said, as the allies seek to tighten readiness over North Korea's potential weapons tests.

The annual summertime exercises, renamed Ulchi Freedom Shield this year and scheduled to end on September 1, came after South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, vowed to "normalise" the combined exercises and boost deterrence against the North.

South Korea separately launched the four-day Ulchi civil defence drills yesterday, designed to boost government readiness, for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic emerged.

The military and civil exercises are aimed at improving the country's preparedness to match the changing patterns of war, with evolving cyber threats against key facilities such as chip factories and supply chains, Yoon said.

"Maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula is built on our airtight security posture," Yoon told a cabinet meeting,



calling for thorough exercises based on real-world scenarios.

The drills were the largest since 2017 after being scaled back because of Covid-19 and as Yoon's predecessor sought to restart talks with Pyongyang, which has called the exercises a rehearsal for invasion.

North Korea fired two cruise missiles from the west coast last week, after South Korea and the United States kicked off preliminary training for the exercises.

North Korea has conducted missile tests at an unprecedented pace this year and is ready to conduct its seventh nuclear test at any time, Seoul officials said.

Yoon has said his government is willing to provide economic aid if Pyongyang takes steps toward denuclearisation, but North Korea has rebuffed his offer, openly criticising him.

Seoul's defence ministry has said the allies would stage 11 field training programmes, including one at brigade-level - involving thousands of soldiers - this summer.

To better counter North Korea's growing missile threats, the ministry said it would improve missile detection capabilities and push for an early deployment of a new interceptor system.



Farmers from various organisations gather as they participate in a protest against the central government policies, in New Delhi, India yesterday. Farmers are demanding that the government guarantee a minimum support price for all produce and clear all farmer debts, among other things, according to a statement from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the farmer organisation that organised the protest yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Lanka faces int'l censure over arrests

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's new government came under international censure yesterday over the use of tough anti-terror laws to detain protesters who forced Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down from the presidency last month.

Three student activists arrested last week during the first anti-government rally after the end of a state of emergency were being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), authorities said late Sunday, including student leader Wasantha Mudalige.

The PTA allows suspects to be detained for 90 days without judicial review. "Using laws that don't conform with international human rights standards - like the PTA - erodes democracy in Sri Lanka," said US ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung.

"We encourage the government to uphold the rights of the people to express their views," she tweeted.

## RESPONSE TO NUCLEAR PROPOSALS

# Iran slams US 'delay'

### Says a prisoner swap with Washington not linked to negotiations

REUTERS, Dubai

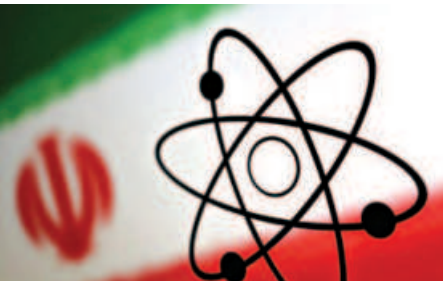
Iran yesterday accused the United States of "procrastinating" in indirect talks aimed at reinstating Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal, and said a prisoner swap with Washington was not linked to the negotiations.

After 16 months of fitful, indirect US-Iranian talks, with European Union officials shuttling between the sides, a senior EU official said on August 8 it had laid down a "final" offer and expected a response within a "very, very few weeks."

Iran last week responded to the EU's text with "additional views and considerations", while calling on Washington to show flexibility to resolve three remaining issues. The United States last week said it was studying Iran's response.

"The Americans are procrastinating and there is inaction from the European sides... America and Europe need an agreement more than Iran," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani told a news conference.

"What is important is the delay by the US side for issuing its response," Kanaani said. "Until we agree on all issues, we cannot say that we have reached a complete



agreement," he added.

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said yesterday that a response from Iran to the EU's latest proposal on a nuclear deal with the US was "reasonable".

Meanwhile, the United States has repeatedly called on Tehran to release several Iranian-Americans held in Iran on security charges. Iran has demanded several Iranians detained on charges linked to US sanctions to be freed.

"We emphasize that the exchange of prisoners with Washington is a separate issue and it has nothing to do with the process of negotiations to revive the 2015 pact," Kanaani said, adding that Tehran was ready to swap prisoners.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump reneged on the deal reached before he took office, calling it too soft on Iran, and reimposed harsh US sanctions, prompting Tehran to begin breaching the pact's nuclear curbs.

"We seek a good agreement which would guarantee Iran's national interests and would be long-lasting...We won't be bitten twice," Kanaani said.

The 2015 agreement appeared on the verge of revival in March after 11 months of indirect talks between Tehran and US President Joe Biden's administration in Vienna.

But talks broke down over obstacles such as Tehran's demand that Washington provide guarantees that no US president would abandon the deal as Trump did.

However, President Joe Biden cannot provide such ironclad assurances because the deal is a political understanding rather than a legally binding treaty.

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid told French President Emmanuel Macron in a phone conversation yesterday that Israel objected to a revived agreement and would not be bound by it should one reached.

## Swiss glaciers shrink in half since 1931: study

AFP, Geneva

Swiss glaciers have shed half their volume since 1931, Swiss researchers said yesterday, following the first reconstruction of the country's ice loss in the 20th century.

Rapid glacier melt in the Alps and elsewhere, which scientists say is driven by climate change, has been increasingly closely monitored since the early 2000s. However, until now there has been little insight into how glaciers changed prior to that during the 20th century, with only a handful of individual glaciers tracked over time, and with different models for estimating their volume.

But Swiss researchers from the ETH Zurich technical university and the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL say they had now reconstructed the topography of all Swiss glaciers in 1931, making it possible to show how they have evolved.

"Based on these reconstructions and comparisons with data from the 2000s, the researchers conclude that the glacier volume halved between 1931 and 2016," they said in a statement.

Their study was published in the scientific journal The Cryosphere.



A Lebanese Navy boat carrying relatives of victims sails past a launch platform for a submarine operation intended to find and salvage the wreckage of a boat carrying illegal migrants that capsized in April some 10km off the shores of Tripoli, at an event in the northern port city yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## EC expects parties

FROM PAGE 12

On July 24, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called for handover of power to a neutral caretaker government and formation of a new EC to ensure a participatory election.

During the dialogue, most political parties said it should be ensured that all political parties, especially the major ones, join the election.

In reply, it cannot compel any party to take part in the polls and it will not make any such attempts.

"The Election Commission would continue its efforts to ensure that all political parties that skipped the talks take part in the election," said Election Commissioner Ahsan Habib.

At least 10 political parties that took part in the talks were in favour of a polls-time government under interim, caretaker or all-party system.

Regarding some political parties' demand that the public administration, home, defence and some others ministries be brought under the EC during the polls, the EC said it would be considered in line with the constitution.

The EC said proposals for introduction of a proportional representation system, bicameral legislature, increasing of parliamentary constituencies and direct election to the reserve seats for women are under the jurisdiction of parliament, the government and political leadership.

About the staggered national elections, the commission said the matter needs more scrutiny.

The commission said they would decide on using electronic voting machine later.

However, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir on Sunday said EVMs would be used in the polls. "It has yet been decided how many parliamentary constituencies will have EVM only voting."

Responding to political parties' allegations that ruling party activists bar oppositions from electioneering, the EC said it believes the ruling party men will refrain from violation of such electoral code of conduct.

The commission added that local and international observers would get access to overseeing the polls.

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি			
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়: বিবি মোতাবেক প্রদেয় ভাতাদিসহ ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের আইসিটি (তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি) সেল-এর নিম্নলিখিত শূন্য পদগুলো পূরণের জন্য ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকার বিনিময়ে রেজিস্ট্রারের অফিসে প্রাপ্তব্য নির্ধারিত ফরমে বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে:			
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১.	সহকারী হার্ডওয়্যার ইঞ্জিনিয়ার টাঃ ২২,০০০-৫৩,০৬৩/- বেতন স্কেলে (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল-২০১৫)	১ (এক)টি	প্রার্থীকে অবশ্যই এস.এস.সি/এইচ.এস.সি/সমমানের ন্যূনতম ২য় বিভাগ/জিপিএ-৫ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.৫০ এবং সিজিপিএ-৪ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.০০ সহ যেকোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হইতে কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/সফটওয়্যার ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/তথ্য প্রযুক্তি বিষয়ে ৪ বৎসরের স্নাতক ডিগ্রিধারী হইতে হইবে। CCTV Camera Solution Desing, Implementation (including VMS server, VSM server, Control Center, Decoder, Video wall, Recording server, Storage server, etc.), Networking (Routing Seitching, etc.) সংক্রান্ত কাজ করার বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকিতে হইবে। CCNA, junor অথবা সমমানের ভেভার সাটিকিফিকেট থাকিলে অগ্রাধিকার দেওয়া হইবে। প্রার্থীর বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০(ত্রিশ) বৎসর হইতে হইবে। CCTV প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানে উপরে উল্লিখিত কাজে ৫ বৎসরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকিতে হইবে।
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রেজিস্ট্রারের অনুকূলে প্রদেয় ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এবং সকল সাটিকিফিকেট ও প্রশংসাপত্রের সত্যায়িত প্রতিলিপিসহ ৮ (আট) প্রস্ত দরখাস্ত আগামী ১২-০৯-২০২২ তারিখের মধ্যে রেজিস্ট্রারের (২০৩ নং কক্ষে) নিকট পৌঁছাইতে হইবে। চাকুরীভর্ত প্রার্থীকে অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে দরখাস্ত করিতে হইবে। জিডি-১৫৮১			